

4.3 TRANSPORTATION

The potential impacts to transportation resulting from the alternatives are discussed below.

4.3.1 Alternative 1

The traffic generated on the roadways within the ROI as a result of activities associated with Alternative 1 would not be adversely affected. The City of El Paso has developed a long-range plan that projects the effects on traffic through the year 2015. The increase in the number of vehicle trips is directly related to the increase in population. The background growth rate would accommodate any increase in traffic due to the activities associated with this alternative.

Under sustained mobilization, additional troops would be on site, which would result in additional slow-moving convoys of troops on U.S. Highway 54 between the Fort Bliss Main Cantonment Area and the range camps. This additional traffic would periodically impede local commuters in El Paso and between Alamogordo and El Paso. However, there is a planned widening of U.S. Highway 54 from the Texas-New Mexico border to Alamogordo, which is scheduled to begin in 1999. This action would further reduce any potential impact that military activities on McGregor Range would have on transportation. Alternately, portions of the troop convoys could be routed along roads on the training complex. However, this potentially slows the movement of the convoys. In addition, increased amounts of munitions would be transported between Biggs AAF and the new ASP on McGregor Range. Compliance with DOT regulations would minimize risks to roadway and land users.

Road improvements on the north McGregor Range to support FTX and JTX, such as Roving Sands, would provide increased accessibility for military and nonmilitary uses. This would benefit a variety of activities including environmental surveys, and range maintenance by both the U.S. Army and BLM.

Under current use, U.S. Highway 54 and New Mexico Highway 506 are closed occasionally for safety reasons when necessitated by McGregor Range operations. McGregor Range activities under this alternative would not change the established closure practices and expected frequency.

4.3.2 Alternative 2

Traffic impacts associated with Alternative 2 would be the same as described for Alternative 1, with the exception that there would be a reduction in the number of road closures along New Mexico Highway 506 due to HIMAD live fire operations. The reduction in the number of road closures is considered a beneficial impact.

4.3.3 Alternative 3

Traffic impacts associated with Alternative 3 would be the same as described for Alternative 2. Because the reduced withdrawn area would not support a full range of HIMAD missile firings, access along New Mexico Highway 506 would be improved due to fewer closures. The reduction in the number of road closures is considered a beneficial impact.

4.3.4 Alternative 4

Traffic impacts associated with Alternative 4 would be the same as described for Alternative 2. Access and use of New Mexico Highway 506 and all roads and trails north of the highway and on Otero Mesa would be unconstrained by military activities. The reduction in the number of road closures is considered a beneficial impact.

4.3.5 Alternative 5 - No Action

The return of McGregor Range to the public domain and the exchange of Army fee-owned land in TAs 8 and 32 would not substantially change the effects of military activities on traffic within the ROI. Military convoys would still use U.S. Highway 54 between the Fort Bliss Main Cantonment Area and the range camps. Access and use of New Mexico Highway 506 and all roads and trails north of the highway or on Otero Mesa would be unconstrained by military activities.

4.3.6 Alternative 6

Under Alternative 6, the designation of the wilderness area or NCA would not likely affect transportation. However, this alternative requires congressional action for implementation. Because the precise nature and extent of the congressional action cannot be determined at this time, detailed transportation analysis of this alternative is deferred until the proposal is specified for this type of nonmilitary withdrawal by the DOI.

4.3.7 Cumulative Impacts

No cumulative effect with respect to traffic would be expected as a result of activities associated with the various alternatives.

4.3.8 Mitigation

In the absence of any adverse effect on traffic, no mitigation would be required.

4.3.9 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

No irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources would occur.